

## **You are not allowed to tell: organisational culture as a barrier to child protection workers seeking assistance with traumatic stress**

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Child protection work is one of the most difficult and complex areas of human services practice. Working within a trauma laden environment often means that practitioner susceptibility to trauma related mental health issues is an occupational hazard. However, many practitioners are reluctant to seek support from their line supervisors when they start to experience traumatic stress symptomology.

This paper considers current literature relating to child protection workers exposure to work related traumatic material, resulting traumatic stress symptomology and organisational responses to practitioner distress. Results from a recent doctoral study which explores the experiences of child protection practitioners based in Queensland will be presented. Findings from the study were derived from qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The study found that child protection practitioners experience substantial trauma as a result of working in a trauma-laden environment. Also found was reluctance to seek support due to an entrenched organisational culture of isolation and rejection of those who exhibit symptoms of traumatic stress.